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Poll shows Americans love, ignore Bible

GLENDAL, Calif. (ABP) — What gift will be received gratefully at Christmas and be largely ignored by January?

It's not the latest litter of Dalmatians from Disney. It's the Bible.

More Americans own Bibles than any other product in the nation, but most rarely read it.

Even more people know practically nothing about it, according to a recent study by the Barna Research Group.

The study was commissioned earlier this year by

for many Americans, Barna said.

"In a typical month, some 100 million adults claim to read the Bible other than at church," he reported. "In fact, an estimated 75 million (42%) said that reading the Bible is very important to them."

Major motivations for Bible reading are "to address personal crisis situations, to glean practical ideas on how to live a better life, to gain spiritual guidance, and to feel closer to God," the study discovered.

"Even those who generally do not read the Bible — and that includes almost half of the adult public — express positive attitudes toward the Bible," Barna noted.

However, many non-readers cite difficulty in understanding Bible passages as a deterrent to reading it, he said.

Not surprisingly, they also feel reading the Bible holds little value for them.

That may be due to their choice in Bibles. The King James

Version is far and away the most frequently used Bible translation, despite its 400-year-old vernacular.

The King James is the translation of choice for 37% of Bible readers, the study found. That's more than five times the usage of the next-closest rival, the New International Version (7%). Other translations cited by Bible readers were the New King James (3%), Contemporary English (2%), and the New American Standard (2%).

Twenty-one percent select other translations, and 28%

aren't sure what translation they read.

Translations aside, Americans hold the Bible in high regard, the Barna poll revealed.

Eighty percent of Americans said the Bible is the most influential book in world history. In that regard, it got 16 times as many votes as its next-closest competitor, Dr. Spock's "Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care."

Still, no matter what Americans think about the Bible, many know very little about its contents.

On the positive side, 90% of Americans know the Bible teaches "Jesus was crucified, died, rose from the dead and is spiritually alive today; that Jesus was born to a virgin; and that eventually all people will be judged by God," the poll found.

"But there is undeniably a substantial degree of biblical ignorance in America today," Barna asserted.

"For instance, we discovered that three out of four adults (72%) believe that people are blessed by God so that they can enjoy life as much as possible," he said. "This is an American cultural lesson, but certainly at odds with Scripture. See Gen. 12:1-3."

About 12% said they don't know what the Bible teaches about life after death. That makes "a majority of adults who are confused about one of the key teachings in the Bible," Barna said.

Churches can remedy some of these problems by getting believers "to consistently read, understand, and apply the Bible to their lives," Barna maintained.

He offered four suggestions:

◆ Provide basic skills.

"Most Americans do not know how to read the Bible, are unaware of the existence or value of reference tools, and are frightened by the bulk of the text," Barna said. "Introducing people to basic Bible usage skills will defuse many of their fears and negative assumptions."

◆ Expose people to reader-friendly versions.

"More than three-quarters of all adults do not have literacy skills to comprehend the King James Version or other versions which use complex language," he noted.

Information about easier-to-read translations will help.

◆ Make the Bible relevant.

"Try tailoring the learning approach to the audience you work with," Barna advised ministers and Sunday School teachers.

For example, younger adults respond best to Bible study that involves dialogue, and they relate best to stories in Scripture, he said.

Younger adults and baby boomers like to "challenge their worldview by exploring biblical principles, truths and standards, rather than using the Bible as a history text or a source of knowledge for its own sake."

◆ Inspire usage through benefits.

"People shy away from reading the [Bible] if they feel pressured into it by guilt or duty," Barna advised.

"If you can identify personal benefits they will receive from the excursion, they are more likely to test the Book."

Tyndale House Publishers.

More than nine out of 10 American households own a Bible, Barna discovered. More than three out of four homes have two or more Bibles.

"Coke, Apple, Proctor & Gamble — they'd kill for a [market] penetration level of this magnitude," George Barna declared in the latest issue of his newsletter, "The Barna Report."

The Bible is "a revered text"

And the winner is...

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Several winners of 1996 awards in the Christian Country Music Association (CCMA) have Southern Baptist ties.

The female vocalist of the year, Paula McCulla, is a member of Tulip Grove Church, Nashville, while Randy Fox of the vocal group of the year, the Fox Brothers, is a member of First Church, Franklin, Tenn.

Seneca, winner of the vocal duo of the year, has worked on behalf of True Love Waits, the youth campaign for sexual abstinence before marriage which spread internationally after its launch by the Baptist Sunday School Board.

Don Pardoe, of Wilcox & Pardoe, named new artist of the year, is a member of First Church, Nashville. The Christian Country Music Association (CCMA) fourth annual awards show was Nov. 14 in Nashville's Ryman Auditorium. Winners were chosen by 1,200 CCMA members.

Looking back

10 years ago

A gift of land and timber valued at over \$700,000 is made to William Carey College by Joe Tatum, president of Tatum Development Corporation. The gift includes 44.5 acres of land, 19.9 acres of road right-of-way and the timber on the land.

20 years ago

Mississippi College opens its "Breakthrough" \$5 million capital funds campaign. Co-chairmen Henry Hederman and J. Herman Hines hope to raise \$2.5 million for faculty support, \$2 million for the School of Law, and \$500,000 for a new women's dorm.

50 years ago

Eleven of 13 Mississippi Baptist Student Union secretaries attended the Secretaries' Seminary in Nashville last month. They were given a copy of the first issue of "Home Life," the new Baptist Sunday School Board publication.

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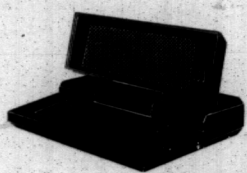
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Editor

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It's never to late for this important resolution

It is impossible to make it through the Christmas and New Year seasons in America without becoming saturated with images of happy people engaged in alcoholic overindulgence.

From the beer and wine commercials during every commercial break of every college football bowl game, to billboards advertising fancy-wrapped bottles of "good cheer," to the party animals in New York's Times Square on New Year's Eve, the U.S. is flooded with images of people enjoying this addictive, legal drug.

It's time we sobered up.

An article by Barbara R. Thompson in the current issue of "World Vision" magazine, published by the international humanitarian group of the same name, paints a horrifying mural of the global depravity brought on by alcohol consumption.

Ten percent of the world's drinkers become addicted and consume 70% of the world's alcohol.

France has one of the world's highest rates of cirrhosis of the liver — a disease largely unknown among non-drinkers.

In Canada, nine out of 10 violent crimes are committed under the influence of alcohol or other drugs.

More than \$58 billion is spent each year in the U.S. for alcohol-related problems. (An aside: How much tax money does alcohol bring into the Mississippi treasury, Mr. Legislator?)

In America, someone is killed by a drunk driver every 24 minutes; in Papua New Guinea, more than 85% of all traffic fatalities are alcohol-related.

Russians consume an average of 15.3 quarts of pure alcohol per capita each year; the World Health Organization (WHO) considers 4.75 quarts of alcohol consumption per year to be a health risk.

Russians are now the global leaders in alcohol abuse, and you don't have to be a social worker to see the effects on their society even from our viewpoint several thousand miles away.

In some areas of Africa, 44% of average per capita income is spent on alcohol.

An estimated 80% of Lithuanians are alcohol-dependent.

In Chile, 70% of job absenteeism is alcohol-related.

Kenyan youth begin drinking as early as age 13 in twisted mimicry of the beautiful people they see in sexy advertisements.

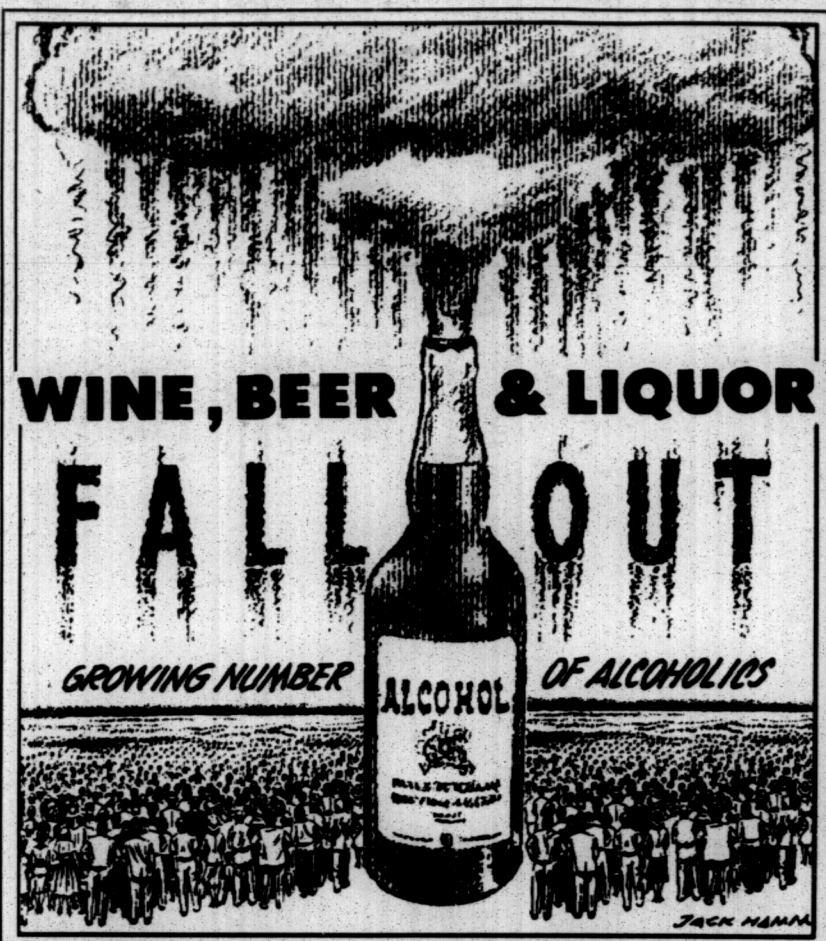
Yet — "That's the opposite of what we see in medicine. We see young professionals with rock-hard livers who need transplants to survive," according to Robert Fisher, a substance abuse expert and WHO consultant quoted in Thompson's "World Vision" article.

Thompson relates the heartbreaking story of a Ugandan boy whose alcoholic father routinely beat him while his mother turned most of their millet food crop into a potent home brew to satisfy their addiction.

Despite his alcohol-induced early emotional trauma, he grew up to become a devout Christian, a righteous husband, and a devoted father of nine.

He was killed by a drunk driver. Over the next decade of time:

- ◆ four of his children became alcoholics.
- ◆ two daughters became infected with AIDS due to alcohol-induced sexual promiscuity, and both subsequently gave birth to children with fetal alcohol syndrome.
- ◆ more than 30 of his grandchildren are



growing up in alcoholic homes.

Isn't one life — not to mention 30 lives — more precious than this awful fate?

We may not be personally able to rid the world or our country or even our family of this pandemic curse, but we can do something within ourselves.

If you're a Southern Baptist, there's no middle ground. We are a people who believe that alcohol consumption in any amount, at any time, anywhere, is just plain wrong.

It's never to late to stop drinking. Resolve to do it for your health (1 Cor. 6:19) and for your Christian witness (Rom. 14:21).

Let's practice what we preach. What a glorious way to start the new year!

A PASTOR'S PERSPECTIVE:



Resolutions, weeds, and the Christian life

By Carl M. White, Associate Editor

tion, is it not? What a dilemma!

He wanted to get out of the bind of breaking his resolve, but in order to do so he had to have the resolve to make the resolution to have no more resolutions.

Does that make sense? Let me restate it. In order to not make any more commitments, you have to have the commitment to keep the commitment to not make any more commitments.

See! That's clear as mud.

The truth is you cannot escape commitments in life. To avoid those things for which you are responsible takes a certain amount of resolve and commitment itself. In order to

even be irresponsible you have to be committed to irresponsibility and have the commitment to stick with it.

However, irresponsibility seems to be easier than responsibility, but then, so is growing weeds.

When I pastored in Sumner many years ago I had a garden in my back yard. The good people of First Church, Sumner, saw to it I had a place to plant squash, tomatoes and corn. Wanting to please them and be a good pastor, this city boy got seed and planted.

Before the summer was over I had the best crop of weeds the town of Sumner had ever seen. (Just call "Slick" McCullough

or Billy Joe Williams and ask them!) I learned something. Your garden is only going to be as good as you are working it.

The same is true about your life. Your character is only going to be as good as you are working it. Even the best soil will only grow weeds if you don't cultivate it.

The human side of the formula for spiritual growth has always involved words like commitment, responsibility and resolve. New Year's resolutions present to each of us the opportunity to work the garden of our lives just a little bit more so that we might produce a little better fruit.

So, instead of resolving to make no more resolutions, why not make a resolution that you will demonstrate more resolve, or determination, in your spiritual life? Remember the words to the old hymn:

*I am resolved no longer to linger,
Charmed by the world's delights;
Things that are higher, things
that are nobler,*

*These have allured my sight.
That sounds like a good resolution to me. Be resolved!*

Auction planned for remaining Clarke property

An auction is scheduled for 10 a.m. on Jan. 11 at the Clarke College campus in Newton to dispose of the remaining personal property from the college buildings, according to Larry Otis of Tupelo, chairman of the special committee formed to dispose of the Clarke property.

The former Baptist-affiliated junior college has been closed for four years.

"After studying the various methods of disposing of personal property at the Clarke campus, an auction was deemed as the quickest and

most effective process," Otis wrote in a Dec. 17 memo to committee members.

Items to be sold can be inspected on Jan. 9-10 and on Jan. 11 from 8-10 a.m.

Baptist historical books have been transferred from the school library to Jackson for preservation. Remaining religious books will be distributed through the Book Link ministry.

The Clarke College alumni group has already received several items to complete their alumni house, and all remaining materials are to be sold.

Terms for purchase are cash, certified check, or a letter of credit. Items purchased must be removed from the Clarke property by Wednesday, Jan. 15.

The Mississippi Department of Mental Health will ask the Mississippi Legislature in January for approval to purchase the real property from the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board for a group home facility.

The seven large buildings on the campus still contain many furnishings and equipment, such as air conditioners, heaters, electric water coolers,

shelving, tables and chairs.

A comprehensive list of major items to be sold is available from Gillentine Auction Group, 207 North Church Street, Tupelo, MS 38801. Telephone: (601) 842-6328.

THE
SECOND
FRONT PAGE

THE BAPTIST
Record

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Evangelism Conference slated for Jan. 27-28

"Evangelism: The Heartbeat of God" is the theme of the 1997 Mississippi Baptist Evangelism Conference to be held Jan. 27-28 at Broadmoor Church, Jackson.

"Evangelism is the heartbeat of God, and it should be the heartbeat of every Mississippi church. The evangelism conference has been designed to appeal to churches large and

small, and to laypeople as well as pastors and church staff," said S.A. "Sonny" Adkins, director of the Evangelism Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB).

Adolph Coors IV of Englewood, Colo., one-time heir to the Coors brewery fortune and now a Christian businessman and speaker, will

deliver the message during the Jan. 28 evening session.

His life story includes the kidnapping and murder of his father when Adolph IV was 14 years old; stints in the U.S. Marine Corps and on Wall Street; his acceptance of Christ; and his decision to leave the family business to begin a Christian ministry.

Other speakers and guests include:

◆ Benny Proffitt, founder and executive director of First Priority, Inc., in Franklin, Tenn.

First Priority seeks to "present the good news of Jesus Christ in words and actions that are meaningful to today's teenagers," according to promotional material provided by the organization.

◆ Herb Brisbane, director of the Office of Black Evangelism at the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board in Atlanta.

◆ Paul Powell, president and chief executive officer of the Annuity Board of the Southern Baptist Convention in Dallas.

◆ Jack Stanton, director of the International Institute of

Evangelism at Southwest Baptist University in Bolivar, Mo.

◆ Jim Futral, pastor of Broadmoor Church, Jackson.

◆ Don Wilton, senior pastor of First Church, Spartanburg, S.C.

◆ Steve Stroope, pastor of Lake Pointe Church in Rockwall, Texas.

Each session will be opened with prayer by former MBCB directors of evangelism: Guy Henderson, Gordon Sansing Sr., J. Garland McKee, and James Fancher.

In addition, testimonies will be given by Kermit McGregor, pastor of First Church, Mendenhall, and others to be named later.

The morning session on Jan. 28 will feature a panel discussion entitled "Sharing Heartbeats" with Powell representing traditional ministry; Proffitt representing youth ministry; Stroope representing contemporary ministry; and Brisbane representing ethnic ministry.

Riley Harper, minister of music at Emmanuel Church, Greenville, will lead the music program, while special music will be provided by:

◆ R.L. and Beth Sigrest, music evangelists from Yazoo City;

◆ The Mississippi Singing Churchmen under the direction of Milford Valentine of William Carey College's Winter School of Music in Hattiesburg; and

◆ The Mississippi Baptist Symphony Orchestra, sponsored by the MBCB Church Music Department and featuring guest conductor Bruce Zeiger.

Afternoon sessions on Jan. 27-28 will begin at 1:30 p.m., and evening sessions on Jan. 27-28 will begin at 6:30 p.m. The lone morning session will begin at 9 a.m. on Jan. 28.

There is no admission charge for the sessions, which are open to anyone who wishes to attend.

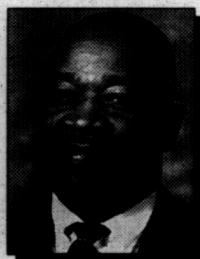
For more information, contact the MBCB Evangelism Department at P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 968-3800 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651.



Coors



Proffitt



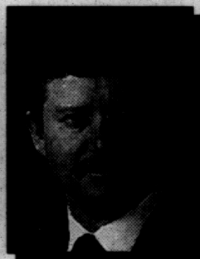
Brisbane



Powell



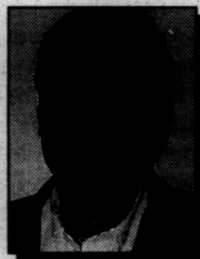
Futral



Wilton



Stroope



Harris

1997 Mississippi Baptist Evangelism Conference

January 27-28

Broadmoor Church, Jackson

Monday, January 27

Afternoon Session — 1:30 p.m.

Welcome/Prayer.....Guy Henderson
Praise/Worship.....Riley Harper
Message.....Benny Proffitt
Praise/Worship.....Riley Harper
Message.....Herb Brisbane
Praise Worship.....Riley Harper
Message.....Paul Powell

Evening Session — 6:30 p.m.

Welcome/Prayer.....G. Sansing Sr.
Praise/Worship.....Miss. Baptist
Symphony Orchestra
Message.....Jack Stanton
Brown-Davis Awards
Praise/Worship.....Miss. Baptist
Symphony Orchestra
Testimony.....Kermit McGregor

Praise/Worship.....Miss. Baptist
Symphony Orchestra
Message.....Jim Futral

Tuesday, January 28

Morning Session — 9 a.m.

"Sharing Heartbeats" Panel
Paul Powell - traditional ministry
Benny Proffitt - youth ministry
S. Stroope - contemporary ministry
Herb Brisbane - ethnic ministry

Afternoon Session — 1:30 p.m.

Welcome/Prayer.....J. G. McKee
Praise/Worship.....The Sigrests
Message.....Don Wilton
Praise/Worship.....The Sigrests
Message.....Steve Stroope

Praise/Worship.....The Sigrests
Message.....Jack Stanton

Evening Session — 6:30 p.m.

Welcome/Prayer.....James Fancher
Praise/Worship.....Miss. Singing
Churchmen
Message.....Don Wilton
Praise/Worship.....Miss. Singing
Churchmen
Message.....Adolph Coors IV

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From Interstate 55 North, take
Northside Drive exit and proceed
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Church address is 787 E. North-
side Drive, at intersection of E.
Northside Drive and Manhattan
Road. Church telephone number
is (601) 366-8433.

U.S. finally agrees to rescue at-risk Kurds

WASHINGTON (BP) — The United States plans to evacuate up to 5,000 endangered Kurdish relief workers and family members — including hundreds known to Southern Baptists — from northern Iraq in the near future.

The Kurdish workers, under threat of death from Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein, reportedly will be moved across Iraq's northern border into Turkey.

From there they will be flown to Guam for processing, then on to the United States for resettlement.

The evacuees, employed by more than 20 aid groups, will include 363 workers and family members connected to an international relief agency through which Southern Baptists have

well-being of these people," the spokesman said.

That statement represents a major victory for the Western aid workers, who have sought the evacuation of their Kurdish colleagues with increasing desperation.

"I think what you are seeing here is the administration reacting to some rather intense pressure from the (aid) community," a diplomat in Turkey told the "Washington Times."

"(They) want very much to get their people out, and they have apparently made a convincing argument," he said.

For three months the Kurdish workers have faced the threat of retaliation from Saddam Hussein because they had worked with U.S. or for-



WAITING FOR HELP — A young Kurdish family living in a tent city in the open mountains of northern Iraq is representative of those awaiting word on whether they will be evacuated to America in an effort to escape certain death at the hands of Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein. Hussein's henchmen have been seeking out and killing Kurds suspected of helping Western relief and religious agencies. The Kurds are long-time political opponents of the Baghdad regime. (BP file photo by Paul Obregon)

Kurdish Southern Baptist workers escape

ANKARA, Turkey (BP) — The United States began evacuating Dec. 4 about 5,000 Kurdish relief workers and their families from northern Iraq — where their lives were at risk from Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein.

Among those rescued were 357 Kurds connected to an international relief agency through which Southern Baptists have aided the Kurds in northern Iraq since the end of the Persian Gulf War.

The challenge now is to find places for the Kurds to begin rebuilding their lives, said Paul Smith, a Southern Baptist who worked in northern Iraq until his recent retirement.

The evacuation came almost three months after U.S. forces cleared out about 2,000 Kurds

connected to American military and U.S. government agencies operating in northern Iraq, leaving behind about 5,000 people related to nongovernmental relief agencies.

American aid workers feared Saddam Hussein would make good on his threat to kill Kurds who had collaborated with his enemies.

InterAction, a Washington-based umbrella coalition of 150 humanitarian agencies, mounted an intensive campaign to convince the U.S. government to evacuate the remaining relief workers and their families.

President Clinton approved the evacuation after the November presidential election.

The workers and their families were bussed to the Turkish border, where representatives

of the relief agencies vouched for them individually. After thorough questioning by Turkish troops, the Kurds were then taken to an air base and flown by military transport to Guam, to be processed for refugee resettlement in the U.S. and elsewhere.

"They were turning back about 15% of the people at the border," Smith said, "but none of ours were turned back. That's quite good, and we're real thankful."

One group of refugees may eventually resettle in Greenville, N.C., where they have been offered jobs by a drilling company they worked for in Iraq, Smith said. Several dozen other families, however, will need sponsors to help them begin life in the United States.

Four Southern Baptists and their children fled the area Sept. 3 after discovering U.S. personnel had left for the Turkish border at dawn.

Within days, U.S. forces evacuated Kurdish workers and dependents directly employed by "Operation Provide Comfort," the five-year-old American-led effort to help the Kurds.

They left behind thousands of Kurdish employees, spouses, and children connected with Western aid groups.

Despite the murder or harassment of a number of Kurdish aid workers by Iraqi forces, U.S. officials claimed most of the workers faced no real threat from Saddam.

The aid groups vehemently disagreed.

The Kurdish workers are "closely identified with the Americans and are considered traitors by Saddam," said Paul

Smith, a Southern Baptist from Eufaula, Okla., who worked in northern Iraq until his recent retirement. "We all know very well what Saddam will do with traitors."

Smith and others began an intensive campaign — first publicly, then behind the scenes — making repeated trips to Washington to appeal for the Kurdish workers' rescue.

The break came after last fall's presidential election, when word came that President Clinton had approved the evacuation.

Smith already has lined up a number of Southern Baptists willing to sponsor the evacuees when they reach the U.S.

Bibliocipher

By Charles Marx
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JTEDJX EC ERSXT CVX
RCDLT, QXY LRTV RCV
UJTQE ERSXUL UCY RQER
YCXT DXEC ERTT. QXY RT
VTXE RSL VQG, QXY
IDZOSLRTY ERJCDURCDE
ERT VRCOT HSEG RCV
UJTQE ERSXUL BTLDL
RQY YCXT DXEC RSA.

ODPT TSURE: ERSJEG-XSXT

Clue: G equals Y

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Psalms Four Six

aided the Kurds in northern Iraq since the end of the Persian Gulf War.

The evacuation was to have remained secret until it was completed because of concerns that Saddam Hussein or various Kurdish factions might try to prevent it, but news organizations began reporting the plan Nov. 25 and it was confirmed by the U.S. State Department the same day.

"We intend to move forward with the departure from northern Iraq of local employees of U.S.-funded and/or U.S.-based nongovernmental organizations and their family members," a State Department spokesman acknowledged during a press briefing.

"We are concerned about the

eign-sponsored relief groups. At the end of August Saddam sent troops and agents into the region, which was supposedly protected by the United States and its Gulf War allies.

The Iraqis were "invited" by the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP), which wanted help fighting a rival faction.

U.S. government personnel based in northern Iraq quickly exited the area, reluctantly followed by most Western relief workers who had worked there despite Iraqi threats.

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EUROPEAN TRAVEL: I am a conservative Baptist minister that is coordinating a tour to England and Scotland in June 1997. For more information contact Timothy Hamblin in Birmingham at (205) 979-0381 between 9:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m.

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THIS IS NOT CHILD'S PLAY!"



PLAYING CHURCH

CARTOONS AVAILABLE

Editor:

Again this year I have prepared a set of ten cartoons on the "Ephesians" Bible Study.

The idea is for those teaching the January Bible Study to put these on transparencies and use in their sessions.

The cartoons are free but we ask \$2 to cover postage and handling.

Joe McKeever, pastor
First Baptist Church
P O Box 1357
Kenner, LA 70063

KNOWS SMOKING'S HARM

Editor:

I usually do not respond to responses, but in this case I felt it necessary to do so.

Melinda Allen in her (Dec. 5) response to my letter confused two points: first-hand smoke which is deadly and second-hand smoke which has no evidence that it causes deaths.

While I totally agree with Allen that first-hand smoke is extremely dangerous and

many times lethal, there has no evidence been put forth to prove that second-hand smoke is.

Neither am I defending smoking. I smoked from the time I was 16 until I was 27.

Being a two-pack-a-day smoker I know the harm that smoking can do.

I know how it feels not to be able to breathe because of smoking so heavy that your lungs hurt, along with other ills. But this is still the consequence of first-hand smoke.

May I offer one last observation: Why must we succumb to innuendo and insult when we disagree with another person's position?

Larry Smith, pastor
Hebron Church
Sardis

SPEAKERS COMMENDED

Editor:

A few months ago, a fellow student minister passed me a copy of "The Baptist Record" when I told him that I was having a tough time finding someone to speak to our youth on substance abuse from a Christian perspective.

In the "Record" I saw an article on two men who were available to address students in that area. As it turns out, I contacted

them and invited them to speak. They accepted and it turned out to be one of the most meaningful nights we have had with our students.

Mark McDonald, bivocational pastor and assistant police chief in Hickory; Dale Round; and a K-9 drug dog named "Lulu" did a great ministry with our students Nov. 20.

McDonald did a great job in presenting the dangers of substance abuse from a law officer perspective as well as from a Christian perspective.

Then Round gave a very heartfelt and "unrehearsed" testimony of his life and how substance abuse had affected him and his family.

More than that, he helped our students see the tragedy of "writing off" people just because they are "bad news."

He explained the urgent need for us to be a witness to all people and that everyone deserved to hear the good news of Christ love's for us.

Of course, "Lulu" was a big hit with everyone!

I would highly recommend them to any group—adult and/or student.

McDonald can be reached (daytime) at (601) 646-2211.

David Tadlock
Pascagoula

HERE'S TO BIVO PASTORS

Editor:

"My friends, we sometimes like poor ground bound turkeys, aspire to soar high in the heavens with stately eagles.

"We, by aligning with, and touting some of the popular leaders in our denomination as well as some in modern Christianity, make ourselves believe we are one of them, and often we become one of them.

"Then at the very apex of this high flight of fantasy, we suddenly get the feeling that we are really in formation with a flock of buzzards, ready to move in on the first badly wounded individual that we see.

"Our Maker created buzzards in their fashion, but the Book claims that he made us in his own image!" (A paraphrase of James 2:1-7; based on an old office cartoon).

I prepared this for the greatest group of preachers existing in our denomination today, the bivocational guys who don't have time to play much golf, or do much hunting and fishing, but make their recreation con-

sist primarily soul winning, or supporting their family in a secular job area.

Yet some of these guys, risen to the height of their profession in the secular world, or fortunate enough to have succeeded in their business, are far more qualified to run a large organization such as the SBC and are ignored, while we are losing our fight.

Personal vendettas, personal doctrinal ideas, nepotism, refusal to answer to some form of authority except that derived in their minds, etc., seems the norm. Pray for us small timers.

Donald R. Windham, pastor
Ted Church
Bay Springs

BEWARE RIGHT WINGERS

Editor:

Each year, about this time, some right-wing religious leaders are on TV telling us how they can trace their heritage all the way back to the Mayflower and the pilgrims.

Of course, they are correct. There were some folks among the pilgrims who adhered to right-wing theology over Christianity.

Within 20 years after the landing and founding Plymouth Colony, some Christians were being persecuted.

In 1636 Roger Williams fled the colony and founded Rhode Island where he could practice his faith.

He founded the first Baptist church in America at Providence, R.I. in 1639.

Baptists are the people who have traditionally insisted upon the complete separation of church and state.

Remember, this was more than a century before the provision for separation of church and state was incorporated in the Bill of Rights.

The courageous action of Williams led to the great revivals and other religious growth in America.

What about the fundamentalists who persecuted the early Christians?

We know that ultimately they caused one of the darkest chapters in American history.

Each time you see one of these right-wing folks in person or on TV, think back on history.

The people who were engaging in the unspeakable evil just mentioned also claimed to be Christians.

When people find it necessary to lie and bear false witness to try to influence others, you should question their ultimate goal.

Carl L. Hess
Ozark, Ala.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

M. Bryant, former pastor, dies

Milton Bryant, 90, died Dec. 10 of heart failure. Funeral services were held Dec. 14 in Brookhaven.

Bryant, 90, a native of Blue Mountain, attended Mississippi College, Blue Mountain College, and graduated from Union University and Southwestern Seminary. He previously served as pastor of West Corinth Church; Kossuth Church, Bogue Chitto; and Shivers Church. He worked for the Home Mission Board for 10 years as a home missionary.

He is survived by his wife Lona; sons, Milton Bryant, Potomac, Maryland, and Joseph Bryant, Dallas, Texas; daughter, Mary Faith Ferguson, Calgary, Canada; brother, Terry Bryant, Blue Mountain; six grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren.

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ALL SIZES
SALES AND RENTALS

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Kingdom attitudes

Matthew 18

By Mark Long

Matthew records in 16:21 that Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem to suffer and die. The effects of Christ's humility on his disciples' lives were difficult to comprehend. In chapter 18, Matthew recorded some of these effects. Here one finds some attitudes of the kingdom.

Humility (18:1-4). While Jesus prepared himself for the humiliation of the cross, his disciples jostled for positions of power and/or privilege in the kingdom. In verse one, the disciples asked Jesus to settle the issue. In response to the question of greatness, Jesus told the disciples to become humble like a child. In terms of greatness

and power in society, the child was humble, not "great." Though children do not always act humbly, they are highly dependant on adults to meet their needs.

In verse three, Jesus illustrated that more important than position in the kingdom is the question of mere entrance into the kingdom. The disciples must "turn" from their concern for personal greatness.

Jesus used the strongest form of negation in the Greek, a double negative. Loosely translated, Jesus said that unless they turned, they would by no stretch of the imagination even enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus then described the great ones of the kingdom in



Long

verse four. The great ones are those who humbly realize their dependance on God to meet their needs, not those who realize how much they can do for God's kingdom. The great ones are those who humbly subject themselves to God's will, not those who seek to subject others to their will.

Since the concern of the disciples was greatness in the kingdom, throughout the rest of the chapter Jesus taught the disciples how to be truly great in the kingdom. He applied genuine humility to life.

Concern for Others (18:5-7). Greatness and humility are not about demanding my rights and doing whatever is allowable for me. They are about being concerned for others.

In verse five Jesus taught that great ones in the kingdom accept in his name those we would call, "the little people".

Jesus spoke of receiving "a child like this," or "this kind of child." The child was a symbol of humility. The emphasis was on the lowly state of the child. Great ones accept those who are not readily accepted.

In verses six and seven Jesus taught that great ones in the kingdom will avoid a proud ambition which causes others to sin. Being lost forever in the deepest ocean would be better than facing eternal judgment for self-concern which causes others to stumble.

Self-discipline (18:8). Verses eight and nine illustrate the drastic changes the great ones in the kingdom are willing to accept in their lives. Notice, Jesus did not say, "Let your hand be cut off." He said, "You cut it off and throw it away." Only those who can humbly evaluate themselves and submit to God can accept the changes in thought, word, and deed demanded by the call of Christ. Those who are still con-

cerned with personal greatness (power, position, comfort, pleasure, etc.) are not able to accept the humility of drastic self-discipline.

In our pop-psychology culture, we might do well to determine that it is better to go to heaven with a slight "complex," than to go to hell with a worldly "good self-esteem."

Forgiveness (18:21-22). While Jesus talked of humility, Peter asked if forgiving someone of wrongdoing up to seven times was perfection. Jesus explained that great ones in the kingdom know no boundary when it comes to forgiveness. The parable of verses 23-34 illustrated the requirement of citizens of the kingdom to forgive. The haunting words of verse 35 should humble anyone to forgive others, "In this same way will my heavenly Father also do to you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."

Long is pastor, First Church, Perkinston.

FAMILY BIBLE SERIES

Witness about Christ

Mark 1:4-11, 14-15; Luke 7:18-23

By Mary Ellen Powell

Good news, repentance, and belief — our world certainly needs large doses of these things. Thus, it is fitting to start a new year with a message of repentance because repentance brings renewal. It is also fitting that we start this year with a message of sharing the Gospel with others.

Message of Repentance (v. 4-5). The Jewish people had not heard from God for over 300 years, and they needed a new message. John, wearing camel hair clothing and eating his simple diet, came out of the desert proclaiming a message of repentance, baptism, and the coming

of a new day. Today, the unsaved also need to repent and make changes in their lives before they can come to Christ. The saved need repentance for the renewal of their relationship with Christ.

Prediction of Greatness (vv. 7-8). John not only called for repentance, but he also pointed the way to Christ. It is not enough, however, to turn people away from their old lives. They must be led toward a new life in Christ. John's message showed a whole-hearted commitment to the message of the coming Messiah. For us to be effective witnesses for Christ, we must lose our self-awareness



Powell

in commitment to his calling. Daily we must choose to share the Gospel with others in the very way we live.

John also prophesied concerning the coming of the Holy Spirit. The Hebrew word for spirit, "ruach," means breath and wind. To breathe is to live, much as having the Holy Spirit enables you to live abundantly in Christ. The image of wind is one of power and the Spirit brings power to the daily living of the Christian life.

Affirmation of the Messiah (vv. 9-11). John's appearance as a prophet was the sign for Jesus' ministry to begin. When Jesus came to be baptized, he was confirming that he was the Chosen One of God. The voice of the Father affirmed him as the Messiah. The visual picture of the "Spirit descending on him like a dove" (v. 10) was the

picture of the equipping of Christ for the ministry ahead. Before Christ started his public ministry, he received the Spirit; before we minister to others, we must depend on the leading of the Spirit.

Sharing of the Gospel (vv. 14-15). The message Jesus preached can be summarized in three words: good news, repent, and believe; sharing your faith with others can be simply put in these same three words. We must begin with the good news that Jesus loves us and that he died for us. That is indeed good news. All persons must realize that they are sinners and are in need of Christ, but realizing that need is useless without doing something about it — repenting of our sins. Repentance must be followed by turning toward Christ and placing faith in him. The message that Jesus shared has not changed and today we are

called to share that message.

John's Doubts (Luke 7:28-32). As a postscript to this story, we are taken back to John who has been imprisoned and who, in his last days, had doubts concerning Jesus' identity. We can be encouraged that even "spiritual giants" like John have doubts. We can be encouraged that he immediately took his doubts to Jesus as we must do. We can also be encouraged by Jesus' response. Jesus did not scold John for his lack of faith, nor was he offended that someone would question him. He instead responded in truth and love; he answered John's questions and sent reassurance.

The year is fresh and it is a wonderful time to begin sharing our faith with others. Can you think of a better way to begin the new year?

Powell is a member of First Church, Clinton.

LIFE AND WORK

Lord of nature

Matthew 8:23-27, 14:22-33

By Thad Moore

The Lord's Power (8:23-27). Gypsy Smith, a preacher of another generation once said, "If Jesus had not specified Lazarus by name when he said come forth, there would have been a resurrection of all who had died." Smith understood the power of Christ.

The focus of the miracle in this lesson is on the unique power of Jesus Christ. Only the Son of God could calm the sea.

Matthew uses the word "seismus" in verse 24, the word from which we get our word earthquake, to show the severity of the storm. Yet, no matter how strong the storm, Jesus is more powerful.

Many commentators see an ascending order of the miracles described in chapters eight and nine of Matthew. Christ demonstrates his power over disease, nature, and demons. There is no situation in our lives he cannot master. Will we believe him or be like the disciples and be of little faith?

These miracles are intended to help us worship God. As we worship him, the one who has power over everything, our faith is strengthened. Also, Jesus was preparing the disciples for the persecution to come.

The Lord's Presence (Matthew 14:22-27). As this miracle unfolds Jesus makes



Moore

the disciples get in the boat and leave while he dismisses the crowd. Jesus felt the need for prayer and went up on the mountain to be with his Heavenly Father. He made prayer his first choice, not his last chance. While he was praying the disciples were overtaken by a terrible storm.

Jesus chose to come to the disciples in their frustration and helplessness. So often in his ministry, Jesus came to hurting people and gave them the strength to go on with their lives. Christ came to Thomas in his doubts, Peter after he had denied him, and to the disciples in their fear of the strong winds.

Jesus speaks to the disciples in a familiar greeting: "I am." This is a phrase of the self-revelation of God. He is giving the disciples and us the greatest gift of all, himself. These mira-

cles are not just for the disciples, but to remind us that God is with us regardless of our circumstances. In a prisoner of war camp, the chaplain said to his men as they worshipped one Sunday, "Men, the best news in the world is still true even in this awful place: God is with us."

The Lord's Call (14:28-33). After Jesus revealed his presence to the disciples, he expected a response. The first response he wanted was for the disciples to stop being afraid. He commanded them to take courage. The second response for which Christ longed was for Peter to take him at his word. Christ wanted Peter to get out of the boat and walk on the water. He had to attempt the impossible. R. G. Lee said, "You will never get anywhere with God until you attempt that which seems impossible to you or your congregation."

Peter got out of the boat and

started walking on the water. Then he made a mistake, one most of us have made at some time in our lives. He focused on the waves and the water and not on the power of Jesus. He let the circumstances of his situation dictate his response instead of Christ's power. Soon Jesus would scold him for his lack of faith. We can trust God instead of doubting.

Fortunately there is another response to this miracle. In verse 33, the disciples in the boat respond with a confession of faith: Jesus is God's Son. This confession is like the one Thomas makes after he realizes Christ has come back from the dead. We can learn from the disciples' confession. We can worship God and obey him or be fearful. How will we respond to the Lord of all the universe? No situation is beyond his power.

Moore is pastor, First Church, Holly Springs.

THE VILLAGE VIEW

The Baptist Children's Village



Ronny E. Robinson, Executive
Director
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(601) 922-2242

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Gifts of Honor and Memory

A portion of **The Village View** is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor, with taste and respect, those who are and have been special to our special friends.

**NOV. 1, 1996-
NOV. 30, 1996**

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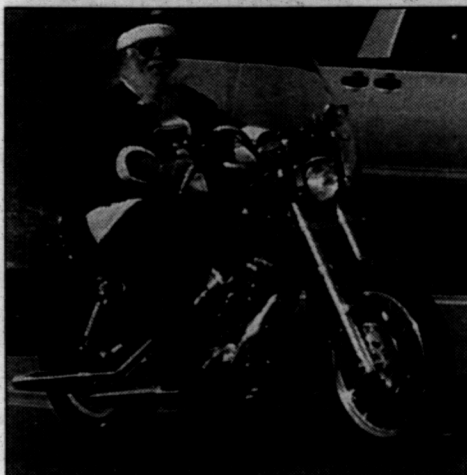
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- 23 anonymous commitments

Total: 122 days committed

In honor of the centennial of the Mississippi Baptist Children's Village, the state's Baptist churches are asked to prayerfully consider supporting the Village for one day in 1997 — a cost of \$7,500. For more information or to request a pledge card, contact Chrystelle Thames, Village public relations director, at (601) 922-2242.



Santa visited Baptist Children's Village residents on his Harley!!!

Children and adults were engulfed by the magic created by the clown, 300 motorcycles, and the generosity of the Central Mississippi Harley Club. Bikers led BCV children in a caravan to the Harley Shop on I-55 and treated them with lunch and gifts for Christmas. The BCV toy run is done each year by the Harley Club in honor of former police officer, John R. Sandifer, who was killed when his motorcycle was struck at Memorial Stadium several years ago. The excitement generated among staff and children alike by the generosity and hospitality of the members of the Harley Club creates lasting memories.



Wesson Church GA's exchange fellowship and addresses with BCV girls on The India Nunnery Campus. (Center is GA leader, Kim Runyon.) The GA's brought Christmas goodies and gifts to the girls.

**In a world
filled with
confusion...
Is there any
hope?**

God's desire is to give you hope.

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes..."
Romans 1:16

Sin robs us of this life of hope!

"For the wages of sin is death..."
Romans 6:23

Jesus cares for you!

"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."
Romans 5:8

It's your choice.

You must decide for yourself if you are willing to turn from your sins and ask Jesus into your heart.

"If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved."
Romans 10:9

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Southern Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

Disney critic arrested in argument with city

BUENA PARK, Calif. (BP) — In a dispute over his church's ministry to the homeless, pastor Wiley Drake was arraigned Monday, Dec. 9, on 11 misdemeanor criminal charges filed by the city of Buena Park, Calif.

Drake received national attention this summer when messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention in New Orleans approved a resolution he introduced that criticized the Disney Company for allegedly abandoning family and Christian values.

Also charged along with Drake were First Southern Baptist Church's secretary, Vondel Mumaw, and treasurer, Eugene Chance.

The three each face up to six months in jail and a \$1,000 fine for each count.

City officials in this Southern California entertainment/tourist corridor linking Knott's Berry Farm with Disneyland, connect the church's ministry to homeless people with an increase in the area's crime statistics.

Police say their calls have tripled from a quarter ago; there was a death they labeled as "suspicious" at the church, along with an attempted kidnapping on the property.

"I think the prosecuting attorney decided this is the time to shut us down," Drake said.

"It's just one of those things where the city has said, 'We don't want homeless people in our city.' To admit you have homeless is bad for business," he said.

The death was from natural causes, Drake said; the attempted kidnapping was unrelated to the ministry.

During the 10 years Drake has been pastor at the Buena Park church, which now averages



OFF WITH MICKEY — Wiley Drake, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church of Buena Park, Calif., removes his Disney tie after messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention in New Orleans last June passed the "Disney Resolution" that he introduced. Drake was arrested in early December in a dispute with Buena Park city officials over the church's homeless ministry. (BP photo by Van Payne).

about 75 for Sunday morning worship, there has been some kind of ministry to the poor.

There was one closet at the church for food and another closet for clothing.

"For a long time we were preparing maybe 10 homeless bags a week — granola bar, fruit cup, vienna sausages — stuff you can eat on the run. Now we put out 400 of them in a week," Drake said.

It is not the giving of food that bothers the city, Drake said. It's the fact that homeless people last spring started sleeping on the church's two-acre property.

"They feel safe here," Drake said.

That violates the city's camping law, said city officials who have been working with the church since May to rectify the situation.

and one of the Buena Park camping law," Drake said.

The church's attorney pleaded neither guilty nor not guilty at the Dec. 9 arraignment.

Drake filed a demur, a motion that it was a complex case. The judge ruled that he would hear the demur Jan. 24.

"We obviously had hoped for a little more," Drake said. "We had hoped they would drop the charges."

"We had hoped for dismissal or at least a revoking of filing of the charges, but the first goal was to have Christmas with my family and ministry," he said.

God continues to get the glory, Drake said.

Because of the local media's frenzied coverage of the city's squabble with the church, a Los Angeles basin anonymous benefactor gave the church \$20,000 the week after Thanksgiving to help in the construction of its homeless shelter.

"We're back to business as usual," Drake said. "Helping people, that's what we do."

Prosecutor explains charges resulting in pastor's arrest

BUENA PARK, Calif. (BP) — City officials here cast a different light on the story of their squabble with pastor Wiley Drake and First Southern Baptist Church's ministry to homeless people.

"The problems out there have just mushroomed," Assistant City Prosecutor Greg Palmer said in a telephone interview. "We have a significant public safety problem because the population has ballooned since the media got hold of the story."

"Police were called to the church eight times between June and Sept. They were called 24 times since then," he said.

While the calls before Sept. were "nuisance" calls such as urinating in public, the calls since then have been for crimes such as assault and battery, burglary, terrorist activity, attempted kidnapping and assault with a deadly weapon, Palmer said.

Two stolen vehicles have been recovered on the property. People have been cited for drinking on the grounds.

Drake was a victim in the

assault with a deadly weapon crime, the prosecutor said.

The terrorist and kidnapping crimes involved use of the outside pay telephone the church asked to be installed on the property.

The city still is investigating the death of a man on the property; alcohol poisoning is a possibility.

The law required that Palmer file charges on all the board of directors of the nonprofit corporation, which is the legal entity under which the church operates. That included the church secretary and church treasurer as well as Drake.

"I can't simply file on Wiley alone even though I think he's the one most responsible," Palmer said. "I understand the church took a vote. They're standing behind him. It's a concerted effort."

"It's a shanty town over there — tents everywhere, tarpaulins, RVs, vehicles in disrepair," he said, "and the situation is going to continue to deteriorate because Wiley's dug his heels in."



Assembly committees meet

Frank Pollard (left), pastor of First Church, Jackson, and James Yates (center), retired pastor of First Church, Yazoo City, talk with Mike Arrington, executive director for corporate affairs at the Baptist Sunday School Board, during the Nov. 15 Glorieta, N.M., meeting of the cabinet and steering committee for the capital campaign for Glorieta and Ridgecrest Conference Centers. Pollard is a member of the campaign cabinet while Yates serves on the steering committee. (BSSB photo by Jim Veneman)



LifeAnswers

Ron Mumbower, Ph.D.
Minister of Counseling
First Church, Jackson

Life Answers is on hiatus until Jan. 16.

Send your counseling questions to LifeAnswers c/o The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Please be brief. Name is not required. Remember: in time of crisis, your pastor can make recommendations on your counseling needs.